

VZCZCXRO4186

PP RUEHAO RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHMT RUEHNG RUEHNL
RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHCV #1637 3371839
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021839Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2209
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001637

SIPDIS

HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
TREASURY FOR MMALLOY
COMMERCE FOR 4431/MAC/WH/JLAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2018

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [EWWT](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT PROPOSES FEBRUARY 2009 COAST
GUARD PORT INSPECTIONS

REF: A. CARACAS 1546

[1](#)B. CARACAS 1580

Classified By: Economic Counselor Darnall Steuart for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) On December 1 Emboffs met with the President of the Institute of Aquatic Spaces (INEA) and representatives of the Ministries of Infrastructure and Foreign Affairs (MRE) to discuss the US Coast Guard's repeated requests for port inspections (ref A). The head of INEA Port Security, Nelson Dominguez, stated that while Venezuelan ports do not have any problems with terrorist activities and have no more trouble with drugs than any other country, INEA would be willing to allow a Coast Guard visit in February 2009. He proposed a preparatory meeting in January to set the February visit dates and select the ports for inspection. Econconselor expressed appreciation but added that we would have preferred an earlier date as the Federal Register notice announcing the "conditions of entry" would likely be published this week and it was too late to delay the announcement. The MRE representative noted that the "progress made today could be aborted if the Federal Register notice goes forward."

[1](#)2. (C) The MRE representative asked what the likelihood would be of delaying the announcement due to the "substantial progress" made during the meeting. Econcounselor responded that a delay at this point would be highly unlikely, but added that it might be possible to issue a press release following the release of the notice stating that the two governments have recently begun talks on a potential Coast Guard visit, and if successful, the "conditions of entry" would be lifted. She noted that the purpose of the Federal Register notice is not to make a media splash, but rather to promote the secure conveyance of cargo between Venezuela and the US.

[1](#)3. (C) In response to a question from INEA, Econcounselor emphasized that the US would welcome INEA staff to visit a port or ports of their choosing in the US. The Venezuelan government representatives pointed to the request in their Diplomatic Note of November 13 which asked that the Coast Guard be prepared to present evidence that its inspections in other countries have contributed to an increase in port security (ref B). The Econcounselor said she was sure the Coast Guard representative who would need to attend the January preparatory meeting would be happy to give such a presentation. She added that in light of the Embassy's on-going difficulties with obtaining visas, we would need assurances that a Coast Guard representative would be able to attend the planning meeting in January. The MRE

representative said she was confident that the Coast Guard representative "would have no trouble getting a visa as this would be a pre-programmed visit." She asked that the Embassy send the details regarding the January planning meeting via diplomatic note as support for the visa application.

14. (C) COMMENT: There is no way to know if the meeting today will result in an approved visit. However, the fact that the meeting actually took place (the MRE canceled previous meetings to discuss the subject) could be taken as an encouraging sign. END COMMENT.
CAULFIELD